

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 /026 W

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P R 121603Z JUL 73

FM AMEMBASSY OSLO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6854

INFO SECDEF WASHDC

JCS

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

S E C R E T OSLO 2541

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, ENRG, NO, UR, US

SUBJECT: NORWEGIAN INQUIRY ABOUT TERMINAL OF SOVIET GAS PIPELINE

REF: OSLO 2536 (NOTAL)

BEGIN SUMMARY. DURING COURTESY CALL ON PRIME MINISTER (REFTTEL), HE ASKED ME FOR INFORMATION ABOUT APPARENT AMERICAN INTEREST IN ESTABLISHING TERMINAL IN NORWAY FOR PROPOSED SOVIET NATURAL GAS PIPELINE. I HAVE UNDERTAKEN TO PASS ON TO HIM ANY AVAILABLE INFORMATION RELEVANT TO HIS INQUIRY--WHICH APPARENTLY STEMS IN PART FROM THE CONCERNS WHICH NORWEGIAN CHIEF OF DEFENSE HAS EXPRESSED TO CHAIRMAN OF JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF.

ACTION REQUEST: THAT EMBASSY BE GIVEN ANY AVAILABLE INFORMATION WHICH CAN BE PASSED ON TO THE NORWEGIAN GOVERNMENT. END SUMMARY.

1. DURING MY COURTESY CALL ON PRIME MINISTER LARS KORVALD ON JULY 11, HE ASKED ABOUT THE STATUS OF US NEGOTIATIONS FOR PURCHASING NATURAL GAS FROM THE SOVIET UNION VIA A PIPELINE TO AND GAS LIQUEFACTION PLANT IN MURMANSK. HE EXPLAINED THAT IN THE ABSENCE ON VACATION OF MINISTER OF INDUSTRIES, HE HAD THE PREVIOUS DAY RECEIVED A REQUEST FOR POLITICAL GUIDANCE FROM THAT MINISTRY ON

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THE POSSIBILITIES FOR A NORWEGIAN TERMINAL FOR THE PIPELINE. HE WAS VAGUE ON DETAILS, BUT APPARENTLY REPRESENTATIVES OF AMERICAN FIRMS WILL BE VISITING NORWAY IN THE NEAR FUTURE, EN ROUTE TO THE SOVIET UNION, AND WISH TO KNOW BEFORE THEY COMMENCE NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE SOVIETS WHETHER A TERMINAL COULD BE BUILT IN THE KIRKENES AREA, FOR USE DURING MONTHS WHEN MURMANSK IS INACCESSIBLE BECAUSE OF THE WEATHER(SIC). (COMMENT: THIS MAY, OF COURSE, BE ONLY A NEGOTIATING PLOY TO STRENGTHEN HAND OF US FIRMS WITH THE SOVIETS.)

3. THOUGH OFFICIALS AT THE MINISTRY OF INDUSTRY APPARENTLY ASKED KORVALD FOR A DECISION NOW, HE SAID HIS RESPONSE HAS BEEN THAT IT IS PREMATURE TO BE SEEKING POLITICAL GUIDANCE ON THIS HIGHLY TECHNICAL SUBJECT, AND THAT GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS AT THE EXPERT LEVEL SHOULD FIRST MERELY HEAR WHAT THE AMERICAN VISITORS HAVE TO PROPOSE. HE COMMENTED THAT THERE WOULD BE MANY PROBLEMS TO CONSIDER, INCLUDING MILITARY ONES. HE ALSO NOTED THAT THE OPERATION WOULD BE ONE WHICH WOULD REQUIRE HIGH EMPLOYMENT DURING THE CONSTRUCTION PHASE BUT VERY LITTLE LOCAL EMPLOYMENT ONCE A LIQUEFACTION AND LOADING PLANT WERE IN OPERATION.

4. KNOVALD THEN ASKED ABOUT THE SHIPS TO BE USED AND WHETHER I THOUGHT THE SOVIETS EXPECTED AMERICAN SHIPS TO LOAD THE GAS IN MURMANSK. I RESPONDED THAT THIS WAS ONE OF THE MANY PROBLEMS TO BE RESOLVED DURING THE COURSE OF WHAT WOULD PROBABLY BE PROLONGED NEGOTIATIONS; SO FAR AS I WAS AWARE NO DECISION HAD BEEN REACHED ON THE CONSTRUCTION OF SPECIAL SHIPS TO CARRY THE GAS.

5. WITH REGARD TO POSSIBLE TERMINAL IN NORWAY, I RECALLED PRESS SPECULATION TO THAT EFFECT SOME MONTHS BACK BUT SAID THAT WE WERE OTHERWISE UNINFORMED. I UNDERTOOK TO PASS ON ANY ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON THIS SUBJECT WHICH EMBASSY MIGHT RECEIVE.

6. COMMENT: WHILE THE PRIME MINISTER ALLUDED IN PASSING TO POSSIBLE "MILITARY PROBLEMS," HE GAVE NO HINT OF THE SERIOUS CONCERNS THAT WERE EXPRESSED IN A PERSONAL MESSAGE THAT THE CHIEF OF DEFENSE, GENERAL ZEINER GUNDERSEN, SENT TO ADMIRAL MOORER LATER IN THE DAY YESTERDAY. GIVEN THESE
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CONCERNS, PLUS THE FACT THAT THE PRIME MINISTER HIMSELF HAS REQUESTED INFORMATION, I BELIEVE IT WOULD BE IN OUR INTEREST TO PROVIDE AS MUCH INFORMATION AS POSSIBLE TO HIM IN THE NEAR FUTURE.
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NNN

*** Current Handling Restrictions *** n/a

*** Current Classification *** SECRET

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: MEETINGS, NATURAL GAS, PIPELINES, SECURITY
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 12 JUL 1973
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: kelleyw0
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1973OSLO02541
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GDS
Errors: n/a
Film Number: P750007-2180
From: OSLO
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1973/newtext/t19730761/aaaahmko.tel
Line Count: 117
Locator: TEXT ON MICROFILM, TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ACTION SS
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 73 OSLO 2536
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: kelleyw0
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 19 SEP 2001
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <19-Sep-2001 by martinml>; APPROVED <02-Oct-2001 by kelleyw0>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: <DBA CORRECTED> jms 971119
Subject: NORWEGIAN INQUIRY ABOUT TERMINAL OF SOVIET GAS PIPELINE
TAGS: ENRG, PFOR, NO, UR, US
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005